

Festival challenges perspectives

review and commentary by Elaine Ostry

Documentaries have the reputation of being dull. This is a little unfair: for instance, the Third World Film Festival demonstrated that the mix of politics and the film medium is quite powerful.

Political documentaries are interesting because they show us cultures and points of view different from our own. Documentaries tend to interview the people of the country, allowing the viewer to hear what they have to say.

It is obvious that the speech and actions of real people are just as dramatic as fictional characters. For instance, in *Broken Rainbow*, an Indian woman slaps an official, crying, "Look at them! You took their very lives from them!" This scene would seem melodramatic in a fiction film; but in a documentary it rings true. Often the speech of political rebels, victims and leaders is quite rhetorical: "Without justice, there is no peace," says an A.N.C. member.

Most of the documentaries I saw at the Film Festival last weekend (all nine of them!) follow the pattern of 'Here-we-show-the-victims-now-we-show-the-victimizers'. This adds to the irony of the piece, highlighting the injustices that the people of that country suffer. For instance, the American businessman is unconsciously humorous when he says, after many scenes showing the harmful working conditions of Filipino workers in his overseas company: "We're showing them ourselves — us Americans." Another similar instance is when a personal friend of Pinochet, the dictator of Chile, claims that "there is no torture in this country. Why torture people? When you can shoot them?"

However, with politics comes political ideology and points of view, and these influences surface in the documentary. The doc-



photo Bruce Gardave

umentary usually consists of interviews with people. The interviews are then edited and arranged, often specifically to present a particular point of view. Therefore, it is likely that what a person says in the film may be only part of what they said in the original interview; or their original statements may have been taken out of context.

Often, the political point of view is evident more by what the filmmakers omitted than by what they included. These omissions are hard to discern if your own beliefs match those of the film. For instance, I did not notice when I previewed *Broken Rainbow* that everyone involved in the situation was interviewed — except for the Hopi Tribal Council which was accused of betraying their own people.

Incidentally, I am now not sure whether *Broken Rainbow* is truly a documentary at

all. I was informed that, at the Festival itself, the actress from one of the roles was introduced before the screening. The inclusion of actors with the "real" Indians was not evident from the pre-screening; can a film using actors call itself a documentary?

That is not to say that all documentaries are politically slanted, or qualify as propaganda. The best documentary of The Third World Film Festival, in my opinion, was *Witness to Apartheid*. This is because it showed many possible points of view. It expressed the views of militant blacks, Bishop Desmond Tutu, and blacks who were not politically active. The film also interviewed whites who were ignorant or who did not care about the situation, whites who were extremely racist, and whites who were ashamed of apartheid and who were trying to change it.

Therefore, it is important while watching a

documentary to look for each point of view, to recognize the stance of the filmmakers themselves, and thereby judge the film objectively. One must also try to recognize one's own views so that they do not hinder one's own objectivity.

Although documentaries must be watched carefully, they are nonetheless interesting because they show the viewer people and places far from his own experience. As in the films of The Third World Film Festival, there is often also a sense of danger. For instance, the reporter and cameraman of *Witness to Apartheid* were themselves arrested during an interview. And only in a documentary, such as *Chile: Hasta Cuando* will the viewer see, among the credits:

"The filmmakers would like to thank those people who risked their lives by appearing in this film."

Making Waves

by Dragos Ruii

Slang language in print drives some people, well... bugfuck (to borrow a word from Stephen King).

Recently, while pontificating on the evils of *Spin* magazine, one of my roommates insisted I read some magazines that uphold the rigid standards of classical English: *GQ*, *Esquire*, *The New Yorker*. (Can you spell Yuppier, boys and girls?)

The implication is that reading one of these will make you a 'better person'. And they look damn fine on your coffee table! Impress your friends.

Let's start at the top, *The New Yorker* — a magazine renowned for its quality writing. After all, you aren't a real author until you have been published there. So let's take a peek... The boring drab cover, with its dreary artwork looks like a dated artifact.

Inside, it's not much better. It is all printed in a jumbled, eye wearying typeface from what looks like a first generation Linotype. I've seen ransom notes with more consistent print. And as a champion of the printed word, this magazine shuns pictures. All you get is text — page after page of gray, archaic typeface.

... boring, rapid, pointless, and totally devoid of interest, but nevertheless, it's perfectly written. Punctuated with tasteful ads for the 'right' products and banks, this magazine sets a new standard for boredom. It's as if it was designed for dentists' waiting rooms.

GQ is slightly better, because it manages to stay contemporary and actually acknowledges that the real world exists (the real world being real only if your income hits six figures). They even make moderate use of slang! (Shhh, don't say that too loud.)

Unfortunately, the whole point of this magazine seems to be to criticize your lifestyle. "No, here's how you should dress!" "Treat your girlfriend like this!" Et cetera. There is a good business rationale behind all this — if you can convince everyone that they need your magazine to be trendy, you will make \$ bucks \$. And just when they catch on to the trend, change it all around so that they constantly need to buy next month's issue.

Esquire falls somewhere in between the insipid ranks of the above two, targeted at successful businessmen (or those who fantasize they are!) to tell them how they should behave.

The common denominator seems to be boredom. If that's what it takes to use 'traditional' writing, it is too great a sacrifice. I know I am going to incur the wrath of English professors and majors everywhere, but screw tradition!

English changes with the times. That's one of the best things about it. Unlike French, we do not have any academy to ensure that the rules and words of our language remain cast in stone. Our language is flexible and expressive — perhaps that's why it has flourished where others have decayed.

Slang and 'bending' of grammatical rules allow you to express yourself in interesting and fresh ways. Why not avoid staid and tiresome prose at the expense of timelessness?

C'mon, relax! Have a bit of fun! Live a little...

(Thousands of Harlan Ellison fans went "Nyaah!" to Hemingway fans around the world! And it was good.)

NEWS FLUFF! GET IT WHILE IT'S HOT!
Just in case you needed to know, Abu Nidal's (the notorious terrorist) phone number in Damascus is 774236. This gem of info came from another disgruntled terrorist,

who felt double crossed and decided to get revenge by revealing all sorts of trivia about his comrades' operations, including their phone numbers.

Fashion notes: the final count on Imelda Marcos' shoes is 1060 pairs (including a set with batteries so that they would sparkle at night)!!!! Can you spell glutton? That's one pair a day for the next THREE YEARS!

Nooo! Samantha Fox (remember *Touch Me*) is NOT using her looks to try to sell records. Just check out her latest poster, where she wears paper towels instead of the mandatory snake. (Pant! Pant!)

Famous Quotes: Alex Guinness was oft remembered on the set of *Empire Strikes Back* by his quote, "Can't the little green thing do this one?" when he didn't want to deliver one of his philosophical lines. Apparently, the cast's name for Yoda was, the 'Green Thing'. I wonder how Frank Oz felt?

Funny Quotes: Once in Italy around the time AstroTurf became popular, Joe Namath was asked by an interviewer "How do you compare AstroTurf to grass?" Joe's reply: "I don't know. I've never smoked AstroTurf."

Smile and have a nice day!


SUB THEATRE
★ MOVIES ★

\$1.00 for U of A Students
\$3.50 for Non-Students

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR AT 7:30 PM.
SHOWTIME: 8:00 PM.

SUNDAY
MARCH 8 • M

**SEE THE COMEDY HIT OF THE YEAR...
OR THESE TWO ARE HISTORY.**



**GREGORY HINES
BILLY CRYSTAL**

**RUNNING
SCARED**

Tuesday, March 3, 1987

Medicine

Get the facts about the challenge and opportunity of the Canadian Forces Medical Officer Training Plan.

Students of medicine, under the Medical Officer Training Plan, your medical studies can be subsidized for a maximum of 45 months, including internship. You will attend a Canadian civilian university, your textbooks and necessary equipment will be supplied and you will be paid while you learn.

Following graduation, you will combine your medical training with

that of an officer in the Canadian Forces.

It's your choice, your future.

For more information, visit your nearest recruiting centre or call collect — we're in the yellow pages under Recruiting.



**THE CANADIAN
ARMED FORCES**

